

CLAIMS

We claim:

1 1. A method of correlating a purchaser of an electronically-purchased item ("EPI")
2 with the EPI, said EPI to be subsequently received by said purchaser, comprising:

3 a purchasing step, wherein purchaser-related financial information is transferred to
4 a seller of said EPI and verification-related digital certificate information is transferred
5 from said seller to said purchaser; and

6 a verification step, wherein said purchaser and said EPI are correlated by requiring
7 said purchaser to provide said verification-related digital certificate information before
8 receiving said EPI and by electronically comparing said verification-related digital
9 certificate information with said EPI.

1 2. The method as set forth in claim 1, wherein said purchasing step includes at least
2 the steps of:

3 creating an electronically-readable indicia corresponding to said verification-related
4 digital certificate information; and

5 associating said electronically-readable indicia with said EPI.

1 3. The method as set forth in claim 2, wherein said verification step comprises:

2 electronically reading said verification-related digital certificate information from
3 said electronically-readable indicia into a verification system prior to receiving said EPI;
4 and
5 comparing said read verification-related digital certificate information with
6 verification-related digital certificate information provided by a person attempting to
7 receive the EPI.

1 4. The method as set forth in claim 3, wherein the EPI is authorized to be released
2 to said person attempting to receive the EPI only after the EPI is confirmed to have
3 associated therewith verification-related digital certificate information corresponding to the
4 verification-related digital certificate information provided by said receiving party.

1 5. The method as set forth in claim 4, wherein said verification-related digital
2 certificate information comprises a self-signed certificate generated by said seller.

1 6. The method as set forth in claim 4, wherein said verification-related digital
2 certificate information comprises a data file containing encrypted data pertaining to said
3 EPI.

1 7. The method as set forth in claim 4, wherein said verification-related digital
2 certificate information comprises a self-signed certificate generated by said seller and a
3 data file containing data pertaining to said EPI.

1 8. The method as set forth in claim 4, wherein said verification-related digital
2 certificate information is generated by a server under the control of the seller and is stored
3 on a smart card.

1 9. The method as set forth in claim 4, wherein said verification-related digital
2 certificate information is generated by a server under the control of the seller and is stored
3 on a PDA.

1 10. The method as set forth in claim 4, wherein said verification-related digital
2 certificate information is generated by a server under the control of the seller and is stored
3 on a cellular telephone.

1 11. The method as set forth in claim 2, wherein said electronically-readable indicia
2 comprises bar coding.

1 12. A method of correlating a purchased redeemable ticket with the purchaser of
2 the redeemable ticket, comprising:

3 a purchasing step, wherein purchaser-related financial information is transferred to
4 a seller of said redeemable ticket and verification-related digital certificate information is
5 transferred to said purchaser; and

6 a verification step, wherein said purchaser and said redeemable ticket are correlated
7 by requiring said purchaser to provide said verification-related digital certificate
8 information before receiving said redeemable ticket and by electronically comparing said
9 verification-related digital certificate information with said redeemable ticket.

1 13. The method as set forth in claim 12, wherein said purchasing step includes
2 at least the steps of:

3 creating an electronically-readable indicia corresponding to said verification-related
4 digital certificate information; and

5 associating said electronically-readable indicia with said redeemable ticket.

1 14. The method as set forth in claim 13, wherein said verification step comprises:

2 electronically reading said verification-related digital certificate information from
3 said electronically-readable indicia into a verification system prior to receiving said
4 redeemable ticket; and

5 comparing said read verification-related digital certificate information with
6 verification-related digital certificate information provided by a person attempting to
7 receive the redeemable ticket.

1 15. The method as set forth in claim 14, wherein the redeemable ticket is
2 authorized to be released to said person attempting to receive the redeemable ticket only
3 after the redeemable ticket is confirmed to have associated therewith verification-related
4 digital certificate information corresponding to the verification-related digital certificate
5 information provided by said receiving party.

1 16. The method as set forth in claim 15, wherein said verification-related digital
2 certificate information comprises a self-signed certificate generated by said seller.

1 17. The method as set forth in claim 15, wherein said verification-related digital
2 certificate information comprises a data file containing encrypted data pertaining to said
3 redeemable ticket.

1 18. The method as set forth in claim 15, wherein said verification-related digital
2 certificate information comprises a self-signed certificate generated by said seller and a
3 data file containing data pertaining to said redeemable ticket.

1 19. The method as set forth in claim 15, wherein said verification-related digital
2 certificate information is generated by a server under the control of the seller and is stored
3 on a smart card.

1 20. The method as set forth in claim 15, wherein said verification-related digital
2 certificate information is generated by a server under the control of the seller and is stored
3 on a PDA.

1 21. The method as set forth in claim 15, wherein said verification-related digital
2 certificate information is generated by a server under the control of the seller and is stored
3 on a cellular telephone.

1 22. The method as set forth in claim 13, wherein said electronically-readable
2 indicia comprises bar coding.